

Paige In Full Study Guide

originally created by Portland Ovations, Portland, ME



“Whether you’re a slam poet from Brooklyn, a middle-aged graffiti-artist in Europe, an adolescent breakdancer in Cuba, a 10-year old rapper in South Africa, or a young woman from Britain, storming stages the world over, hip-hop is about empowerment, finding the joy, and speaking the truth. It’s about making the most of your circumstances and making something out of nothing. It’s a constructive art form with aspirations for building a better, more affirmative way of life”

—The Columbus Hip-Hop Theater Project

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Study Guide

This guide includes information about the specific performance you and your students are about to see; contextual background about the art form; broader historic and cultural connections; suggested activities designed to engage and sustain your students' interest before, during, and after the show; as well as a number of resources to help you extend your exploration.

Use of this guide will help your students to anticipate, investigate, and reflect upon your live performance experience.

Artists

Paige Hernandez (writer, choreographer, performer)

... is a graduate of the Baltimore School for the Arts and received a BA in theater and broadcast journalism from the University of Maryland, College Park. As a teaching artist, Paige has taught throughout the U.S. to all ages, in all art disciplines. She has partnered with many organizations including Wolfrap and Arena Stage where she was awarded the Thomas Fichandler award for exceptional promise in theater education. Paige has performed on many stages in the DC metro area including Arena Stage, Roundhouse, The Everyman Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Imagination Stage, GALA, Discovery Theatre and Charter Theatre as well as others. As a critically acclaimed b-girl, Hernandez's choreography has been seen all over DC and recently in DC/NY's Hip Hop Theatre Festival with Imagination Stage's Zomo the Rabbit. As a performer and playwright, Hernandez has performed her children's show Havana Hop and her one woman show, Paige In Full in various theatres, schools and colleges along the East Coast. More information at paigehernandez.com.

Nick tha 1da (live beats and sound design)

... is returning hip-hop to its foundation with the soul of sampling. He was selected for his successful signature chopped samples & hard-hitting drums which earned his title of DMV (DC/MD/VA) Beat Champion in 2005 & 2006. Nick tha 1da created the musical soundtrack/scores for independent films including Loose Change, a 9/11 documentary directed by Dylan Avery which received publicity on Fox News/CNN. He produced the theme/segments for The Peter Rosenberg Show on Hot97(WQHT-FM) and has produced for artists such as W. Ellington Felton, Raheem Devaughn, Asheru (The Boondocks), NC's Justus League and many more. More information at nicktha1da.com.

Danielle A. Drakes (director, producer)

... received her BA from Goucher College and MFA from The Catholic University of America. As a performer, she has worked with Ford's Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, CENTERSTAGE, CATF, Discovery Theatre, and Imagination Stage. Directing credits include Lions of Industry, Mothers of Invention, Suessical, the musical!, Deep Belly Beautiful, Stop Kiss, Southern Girls, Dutchman, Chain and Late Bus to Mecca. Recipient of TCG's Nathan Cummings Young Leaders of Color grant, Drakes is a member of Round House Theatre's Artist Roundtable, Red Circle, Actors' Equity Association and the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

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Artists continued

Bryan Joseph Lee (Production Dramaturgy)

... is a graduate of Dartmouth College, and holds a degree in Latin American Studies and Theatre. Since 2008, he has worked with the Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in Washington, DC, where he served as Assistant Director and Assistant Dramaturg on multiple productions. Bryan has also worked with the New York Theatre Workshop (NYC), ELEMENT New Play Festival (Chicago), and the Source Festival (DC), among others. Currently, Bryan serves as Program Coordinator of the Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center.

Tewodross Melchishua (Video & Projections)

...received his BA in Art/Photographic Media from Morgan State University, and an MFA in Imaging & Digital Arts from UMBC. He has produced work in video/film, animation, traditional and digital art; music videos and video installation. Recently, he curated the Flashpoint exhibition, M3: MCs, Mics and Metaphors (2009). He is the creative director for Visual Jazz Media Group, and serves as an Associate Professor in visual communication at Bowie State University.

Jamie Yellen (Sets)

...graduated from Goucher College in May 2009 with a degree in Theater and Studio Art. She has designed sets and lights for several shows for Red Branch Theatre Company and Drama Learning Center. She would like to thank Danielle for this opportunity and her support. She would also like to thank the production team, Z, her friends and family for their support.

Zoia N. Wiseman (Lighting & Stage Management)

...received her BFA in Theatre Arts from Stephens College. She has worked with various theatres in Louisiana and the Washington DC metro area. Most recently she stage managed Solas Nua's tour of "Everything Between Us" and was lighting designer for the 2010 Wattage Festival.

Zach Simon-Curry (Scenic Artist)

Bryan Davis (Artwork)

Taken from the Paige in Full website: <http://www.paigeinfull.com/geniuses>

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Performance: “Paige In Full”

Paige in Full is a visual mix-tape that blends poetry, dance, visual arts and live music to tell the tale of a multicultural girl growing up in Baltimore, MD. The production explores how a young woman’s identity is shaped by her ethnicity and popular culture, telling a personal, yet universal, story through the lens of hip-hop.

Porscha Coleman of *DC Theatre Scene* says:

“*Paige in Full* tells Paige’s autobiographical story from pre-conception to present day in a one hour show that grabs the audience by the throat and doesn’t let them go. Part comedy, part pain, and part retrospective on growing up in Baltimore in the late 80’s and early 90’s, we experience Paige trying desperately to fit in, before finding her voice, accepting herself and becoming one of the most fascinating artists to watch of this generation. [...] Somewhere along the way we snake through the streets of Baltimore and DC, by extension learning what each place has meant to Paige. We explore love and its changing concept from sweet, to abusive, to the most coveted of them all, “real love”. The story line is enhanced by definitions of hip hop terminology such as break, chopped and screwed and others to give depth to the transitions in her life.”

To create *Paige in Full*, sibling-duo Paige Hernandez (writer and performer) and Nick tha 1da (musician) worked with Danielle A. Drakes (director) and Bryan Joseph Lee (dramaturg) to develop a story that speaks to a dynamic hip-hop-influenced generation. *Paige in Full* draws upon a range of creative disciplines such as literary, musical, and visual arts. The story unfolds on a backdrop of multimedia projections provided by Flashpoint Gallery veteran Tewodross Melchishua. *Paige in Full* had its workshop production in December 2009 and its world premiere May 11-May 29, 2010 at the Mead Theatre Lab at Flashpoint in Washington, D.C.

From the *Paige in Full* website: <http://www.paigeinfull.com/about>

Watch excerpts from the performance (and more): <http://www.paigeinfull.com/videos>

The title “*Paige in Full*” is a play on the hip-hop classic “*Paid in Full*,” the debut album of American hip hop duo Eric B. & Rakim, released on July 7, 1987. The duo recorded the album two years after Rakim responded to Eric B.’s search for a rapper to complement his DJing.

The album peaked at number fifty-eight on the Billboard 200 chart and produced five singles: “Eric B. Is President”, “I Ain’t No Joke”, “I Know You Got Soul”, “Move the Crowd”, and “Paid in Full.”

Paid in Full is credited as a benchmark album of golden age hip hop. Rakim’s rapping, which pioneered the use of internal rhymes in hip hop, set a higher standard of lyricism in the genre and served as a template for future rappers. The album’s heavy sampling by Eric B. became influential in hip hop production. The record has sold over a million copies and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certified it platinum in 1995. In 2003, the album was ranked number 227 on Rolling Stone magazine’s list of the 500 greatest albums of all time.

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Hip Hop Theatre

In a 2004 American Theatre Magazine article, theater scholar Roberta Uno explored the who and what of hip-hop theatre:

Hip-hop theatre has come to describe the work of a generation of artists who find themselves defined in a new category of both prospective opportunity and limitation. These artists range from dance-theatre choreographers like Rennie Harris, who heads Puremovement of Philadelphia, and the New York City-based duo Rokafella and Kwikstep, founders of Full Circle Productions; to ensemble artists such as Universes and I Was Born With Two Tongues; to solo artists, including Danny Hoch, Sarah Jones, Will Power, Aya de Leon, Caridad de la Luz, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Teo Castellanos and Mariposa; to playwrights like Ben Snyder, Kris Diaz, Eisa Davis, Chad Boseman, Candido Tirado and Kamilah Forbes.

Drama expert and Director of the Institute for Diversity in the Arts, Harry J. Elam Jr. has this to say about the art form:

Hip-hop theatre, like hip-hop itself, is not easily defined. Born out of a creative urgency on urban streets, with self-produced rap tapes sold out of the trunks of cars and graffiti art works sprayed on brick city walls, hip-hop exudes a politics of survival and celebrates the “realness” of its underground roots, even as it is now globalized and commercialized and used to sell everything from sneakers to hamburgers.

Danny Hoch—who (among other endeavors) founded the Hip-Hop Theater Festival which has presented over 100 Hip-Hop Generation plays from around the globe since 2000—authored the “Manifesto for the Hip-Hop Arts Movement;” check it out to learn more about hip-hop arts and the its cultural aesthetic. Available online at:

<https://hemi.nyu.edu/hemi/fr/hidvl-interviews/item/2188-dhoch-manifesto>

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Hip Hop Culture

Hip-hop is a cultural movement that exploded in the early 1970s in the Bronx, New York. It draws upon the dance, poetry, visual art, social and political legacy of African, African American, Caribbean and Latino immigrant communities in the United States. Hip-hop began as an independent, non-commercial musical and cultural form of expression.

The roots of hip-hop are often traced directly to the African American community, but hip-hop scholar Daniel Banks says it has been multi-ethnic since the beginnings. A distinct hip-hop culture emerged as urbanized youth united and, as a way to identify themselves with unions, formed gangs—often referred to as “crews” or “posses”—with whom they found support, identity, and family.

Tricia Rose, author of *Black Noise*, traces hip-hop phenomenon to the creativity and survival efforts of a young generation that was drastically affected and limited by the post-industrial period. With limited opportunities to participate in arts educational programs, limited arts exposure and restricted job opportunities, they used easily acquired material, natural space within their communities and their physical bodies to express, entertain, and empower themselves. Their innovations manifested as rapping, graffiti, and breakdancing, and ultimately became known as hip-hop.

Four cultural activities converged in hip-hop. These four fundamental elements are:

MCing or Rapping:

Stemming from the initials for “Master of Ceremonies,” rapping is the art of saying rhymes to the beat of music. It draws its roots from the Jamaican art form known as toasting. The influences of present day rap can be traced to artists like James Brown, The Last Poets and Gil Scott Heron, along with old “dozens” rhymes and jail house jargon passed down through the years and made popular by Black activist H. Rap Brown.

Graffiti:

The first forms of subway graffiti were quick spray-painted or marker signatures (“tags”) of one’s crew, gang or nickname. Graffiti evolved into large elaborate calligraphy, complete with color effects, shading and more. Graffiti is now recognized as a force in contemporary visual art and is collected by major art institutions worldwide as well as remaining an expression of rebellion and youth culture in public spaces.

DJing:

The art of “cuttin’ and scratchin’” and the manipulation of a vinyl record over a particular groove so it produces a high-pitched recombinant scratching sound is known as DJing. The term also refers to the practice of selecting dance party records or other songs in a compelling thematic sequence. This was invented by Grand Master Flash and Grand Wizard Theodore, two popular disc jockeys from the Bronx.

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Hip Hop Culture continued

Breakdancing:

The acrobatic style of dance that includes headspins, backspins and gymnastic style flairs (long before Olympic athlete Kirk Thompson) is called breakdancing. No one knows who New York's first break dancer was, but a group of youngsters known as "BBoys" or Break Boys and original members of an organization called Zulu Nation popularized it. At the same time breakdancing became known in the streets and dancehalls of New York, Black and Latino communities in California popularized a style of dance known as "Pop-Locking." This particular West Coast form includes strutting, moon-walking, waving and angular, staccato or robot-like contortions of the body. With the broadcast of Don Cornelius's dance-party television show *Soul Train*, breakdancing soon became a nation-wide phenomenon. Many art voyeurs agree that the similarities in movement and energy between capoeira and breaking seem endless -- whether this is coincidence or continuity remains disputed. While breaking has been at the forefront of hip-hop culture for close to 30 years, the last five years or so have put capoeira, an age-old Brazilian martial art form, on the tip of everyone's tongue.

Hip-Hop's Fifth Element

Some members of the community have added a fifth element to the fundamentals of hip-hop:

Activism:

Many see hip-hop as a larger movement—more than just a musical or cultural genre. While this means different things to different people, it suggests that hip-hop is a way of life with its own ethical code, politics and aesthetics. Author and journalist Jeff Chang writes:

The hip-hop generation, the first to emerge after the civil rights and black power movement, has benefited from the cultural desegregation that followed those movements. That success created the conditions for hip-hop culture to become a multibillion-dollar commodity culture that guides what youth listen to, wear and watch. But hip-hop has also reflected and reshaped youths' perceptions of race, power and reality. It serves as a critical space for young people to develop progressive thought and action.

Chang goes on to describe how hip-hop activists have successfully stopped juvenile super-jails in the San Francisco Bay Area and in New York City; involved a new generation in environmental justice movements in the South; fought anti-sweep ordinances in Chicago. And notably in the 2004 and 2006 elections, hip-hop activists also successfully brought young first-time voters to the polls in New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Florida, Ohio and California.

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Hip Hop Resources

More about hip-hop? Check out these resources:

Hip Hop as Performance and Ritual: Biography and Ethnography in Underground Hip Hop by William E. Smith Ph.D. (Trafford Publishing, 2006)

There are many individuals who have upheld the art form of hip hop in the shadow of Washington DC's popular music, go-go. This is the story of one of those MC's, Priest da Nomad, in historical, musicological, and anthropological context.

Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-Hop ed. Jeff Chang (Basic Civitas Books, 2007)

In this wide-ranging, academic anthology of essays, interviews and panel discussions, 2005 American Book Award–winner Jeff Chang (Can't Stop, Won't Stop) presents hip-hop's past, present and future as seen by some of its founding figures, guiding lights, journalists and scholars. From a post–civil rights era grassroots phenomenon born in the streets of the Bronx, N.Y., hip-hop has become a global cultural movement whose stylistic impact and social perspectives clearly extend beyond popular rap music. Part manifesto, part apologia, the collection takes on such topics as the aesthetics behind hip-hop photography and graffiti, offers an informative history of hip-hop dance and assesses hip-hop's effects on literature and theater, while pursuing debates about identity, sexuality and homophobia.

Lyrical Swords: Hip-hop and Politics in the Mix by Adisa, Banjoko, (YinSumi Press, 2004) *Lyrical Swords: Hip Hop and Politics in the Mix*, is a powerful, soul stirring collection of essays and interviews with some of the worlds top entertainment professionals.

Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-hop Generation by Jeff Chang (St. Martin's Press, 2005) Hip-hop journalist Chang looks back on 30 years of the cultural landscape, with a particular focus on the African-American street scene, in this engaging and extensive debut. Chang shows how hip-hop arose in the rubble of the Bronx in the 1970s, when youth unemployment hit 60%-80%; traces the music through the black-Jewish racial conflicts of 1980s New York to the West Coast scene and the L.A. riots; and follows it to the Kristal-soaked, bling-encrusted corporate rap of today.

Tha Global Cipa: Hip-hop Culture and Consciousness by James G. Spady, H. Samy Alim and Samir Meghelli (Black History Museum Press, 2006)

Tha Global Cipa is the first book about Hip Hop Culture to present in-depth conversations with artists from around the world, representing the many regional scenes of the U.S. (from the East Coast to the Bay Area to the Dirty South), France, the Caribbean (from Jamaica to Puerto Rico), and Africa (from Algeria to Senegal), as well as diverse forms of street musics, such as Reggaeton, Reggae/Dancehall, Shaabi and Rai. Here is a book that centers the usually marginalized voices of Hip Hop communities, presenting a remarkably refreshing and revealing view of Hip Hop Culture from the inside-out.

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Hip Hop Resources continued

An Overview: Hip-Hop 101 Website http://www.bhurt.com/uploads/Bhurt_BBR_Educator_Guide.pdf

Resource guide provided by the website accompanying the film HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes which takes an in-depth look at representations of manhood, sexism and homophobia in hip-hop culture. This groundbreaking documentary is a “loving critique” of certain disturbing developments in rap music culture from the point of view of a fan who challenges the art form’s representations of masculinity. Leading rap and hip-hop artists including Mos Def, Busta Rhymes, Russell Simmons are interviewed—and pressed—to answer some difficult questions about the violent and sexually explicit content of many hip-hop songs and videos.

“China – The Hip-Hop Culture” Tavis Smiley Video

https://archive.org/details/WMPt_20110714_160000_Tavis_Smiley

In ‘01, Andrew Ballen quit Duke Law School, to the dismay of his physician father, and moved to China. He didn’t know a soul there or speak a word of Chinese. While teaching English in Shanghai, he felt homesick for hip-hop, a genre of music that was mesmerizing to local youth, and subsequently started a night club. A decade later, the NY native has hosted a number of radio and TV programs seen all across China and runs a burgeoning media empire—all in pursuit of a dream of communicating with people he’s never met and seeing if they shared something essential about humanity.

Black Noise by Tricia Rose (Wesleyan University Press, 1994)

Professor of History and Africana Studies Tricia Rose offers the first detailed exploration of rap music within its social, cultural and artistic contexts.

Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere by Gwendolyn Pough (Northeastern University Press, 1994)

Pough explores the complex relationship between black women, hip-hop and feminism, demonstrating how black women rappers are constructing their own identities in hip-hop.

Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes by Byron Hurt (God Bless the Child Productions, 2006)

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/hiphop/>

A groundbreaking 60-minute documentary that examines representations of manhood, sexism, and homophobia in hip-hop culture. It is a “loving critique” of certain disturbing developments in rap music culture from the point of view of a fan who challenges the art form’s representations of masculinity. Teacher’s guide available online.

The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture by Bikari Kitwana (Basic Civitas Books, 2003)

Former The Source editor Bikari Kitwana examines the state of post-civil rights black America and the legacy of the hip-hop generation.

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Hip Hop Resources continued

Recognize! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute, Online exhibit, <http://www.npg.si.edu/exhibit/recognize/index.html>

While images of hip hop performers are as pervasive in our culture as the music itself, some visual artists have created powerful images that both celebrate and explore the complexity of this creative form. The six artists and one poet whose work is included in RECOGNIZE! have approached hip hop culture through the lens of portraiture, and, in combination, their contributions highlight its vitality and beauty.

Autobiography Resources

Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation edited by Mari Evans (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984)

A critical evaluation of the work of fifteen Black women writers, including the work of Maya Angelou.

Autobiography Essays Theoretical and Critical edited by James Olney (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980)

A collection of essays on the nature of autobiography.

Black Women Writers at Work edited by Claudia Tate (New York: The Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1984)

A collection of interviews by Tate with 14 Black women writers, including an interview with Maya Angelou.

Autobiographical Occasions and Original Acts Versions of American Identity from Henry Adams to Nate Shaw edited by Albert E. Stone (Philadelphia.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982)

An essential reference for students of autobiography in which Stone defines autobiography as a cultural act.

The American Autobiography by Albert E. Stone (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1981)

A collection of interpretive essays on the personal narrative.

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Discussion Points

- How would you translate your life story from something personal to something to share with others? Would it be through music, dance, theater, art, writing, or something totally different?
- Paige in Full was a collaborative production. Discuss collaboration, what it means, and how it works. Then create a poem with your students, having students contribute a line, one-by-one, until a poem is complete.
- The object of this discussion point/activity is to identify and find value in each of our stories and demonstrate how each individual has a place in the group; and how every group needs clearly defined individuals for a clearer snapshot of the makeup of our global communities. Ask your students to draft a blueprint of themselves; by creating several lists, students can identify their contribution to any given group by detailing worldwide historic events relevant to the molding of their personal life, benchmark personal moments, and sift through life long personal memories, from music to poetry, to speeches, to the minute details of their daily life and that of those in their families and neighborhoods; from childhood to adulthood. These lists are the beginning step in the composition of their own “Snapshot soundtrack,” possibly steering them from their earliest memory of a nursery rhyme to the scent of a loved one’s hair, etc.

Activities

Exploring Community History and Cultural Influence

<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/exploring-community-history-and-cultural>

This activity invites students to identify aspects of culture that influence our own behavior and sometimes make it difficult to understand the behavior of other people. Culture is a complex idea, and teachers should be prepared to offer students many examples of cultural features. Lesson plan presented by Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Maintaining our Brand

<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/maintaining-our-brand>

Students learn about advertising and find common ground with their peers by coming together to create a “brand” for themselves. This is another lesson plan from Teaching Tolerance.

Music in Poetry

http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/publications/siycwinter_06.pdf

These lessons introduce students to the rhythms of poetry. The focus is on two poetic forms that originated as forms of song: the BALLAD stanza, found throughout British and American literature, and the BLUES stanzas of Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes. The exercises take poetry off the page and put it into terms of movement, physical space, and, finally, music. Lesson plan by Smithsonian in Your Classroom, produced by the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies.

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Activites continued

Slant Rhyme/Hip Hop as Poetry

<https://www.flocabulary.com/unit/rhyme-rhythm/>

In this lesson plan, students will learn the definition of perfect rhyme and slant rhyme; the history of slant rhyme in Western Poetry and Hip-Hop Music; will examine how and why poets and rappers use perfect and slant rhyme; and then write their own slant rhymes. Lesson plan written by Emcee Escher of Flocabulary a small educational publishing company with a strong commitment to making a positive social impact.

Autobiography: Maya Angelou

<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1985/3/85.03.03.x.html>

The lesson plan introduces concepts of autobiography, biography, and fiction as literary genres; then analyzes Maya Angelou's autobiographical writings and encourages students to use literary devices to explore representations of their own autobiographies. Lesson plan written by Anna K. Bartow for Yale-New Haven Teacher's Institute.

Study Guide Connections to Common Core Standards

RI Reading Into Texts
RH Reading History / Social Studies Subjects
W Writing
SL Speaking and Listening
L Language
VPA Visual and Performing Arts

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